


NSC BRIEFING

15 April 1955

COMMUNIST THREATS AGAINST WEST BERLIN

1. Since 1 April East Germans have been making threatening gestures suggesting that they are preparing to resume pressures on West Berlin.
 - A. They seem to be getting ready to seal off West Berlin from East Germany.
 - B. Principal aim is to shake West German firmness in co-operating with Western defense.
 1. Communists are contrasting West Germany's plight resulting from its association with Western Powers with advantages accruing to Austria through neutral policy.
 - C. Communists may also consider isolating West Berlin desirable for internal security reasons in East Germany now that conscription is imminent.
 1. Would close off West Berlin as haven for men escaping East German military service.
 2. 
 3. Existence of West Berlin as haven contributes to uneasy internal situation.
 - a. Popular discontent in East Germany has been intensified by current food shortages and growing fears that conscription is imminent.

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DOCUMENT NO. 11
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐
☒ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE:
AUTH. DIR 70-2
DATE Jan 82 REVIEWER: 008614

b. There has been isolated cases of active

opposition, but press reports of strikes and large-scale arrests are unconfirmed.

c. Large-scale uprisings similar to June 1953 considered unlikely because of effective control exercised by Soviet and East German forces and general feeling of futility among East Germans in light of 1953 failure.

II. On 1 April East Germans imposed exorbitant tax on trucks from Federal Republic to West Berlin.

A. This was deliberate harassment to point up West Berlin's vulnerability.

1. Followed earlier Soviet threats of retaliation if West Germany ratified Paris Agreements.

2. Also effort to assert East Germany's claim to sovereignty by developing bargaining lever for all-German negotiations.

B. Attempts to settle truck tax problem through negotiations on technician's level between East and West Germany unsuccessful.

1. East Germans have demanded that truck tax issue be discussed at ministerial level.

2. West Germans have decided to slow down interzonal trade deliveries in retaliation.

3. But West Berlin Mayor Suhr and Chancellor Adenauer have ruled out discussions with East Germany on ministerial level.

III. On 12 April East German government made declaration threatening West Berlin in announcing arrest of 521 Western spies.

A. "Inconveniences" for West Berliners promised unless something is done about Western intelligence activities in city.

B. On 16 April East German press said "consequences" of Bonn's refusal to negotiate on ministerial level "will have to be borne by West Berlin."

IV. Spate of recent reports that greater restrictions around Berlin will soon be imposed.

A. Plan has reportedly been made to establish no-man's-^{LAND} level around Berlin.

B. Another plan reportedly calls for cutting East German communications and rail links through West Berlin.

1. East Germans may be preparing to sever elevated lines through West Berlin.

C. Border police has reportedly been strengthened.

D. Reported plans to increase restrictions on movements of persons across Berlin borders.

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E. West Berliners employed in East Berlin are (reportedly) being fired, and West Berlin officials reportedly fear that all will soon be dismissed.

V. Tighter controls around Berlin will probably not reduce Allied access to city.

A. Interference with Allies would probably be minor in nature, so as not to risk armed reaction.